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24 September 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Correspondence from Senator John Sherman Cooper on the Soviet and Chinese Communist Missile Programs

1. At about 9:00 a.m. today I met with Mr. William Darden, on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to show him our proposed reply to a letter from Senator Cooper in which he raised five questions pertaining to Soviet and Chinese Communist missile systems. They had to do with the "Leningrad" ABM system, the "Moscow" system, the "Tallin" system, the Chinese Communist ICBM program and the Chinese Communist technological ability to build a sophisticated system which could penetrate the proposed Sentinel system. Senator Cooper's letter referred to the briefing he had received from Mr. Duckett on Friday, 20 September. It also indicated that he intended to use this information in a closed session of the Senate during which classified material concerning the Soviet ABM and the Chinese ICBM programs would be discussed. Senator Cooper gave his assurance that he would treat the information in a manner befitting its classification. Mr. Maury talked with Darden yesterday to tell him of the letter from Senator Cooper and that we felt we could not avoid a response but wanted to be sure that Senator Russell was promptly informed. Darden was told that a copy of Senator Cooper's letter, and a copy of our response thereto, would be given him as soon as available for passing to Senator Russell. Darden agreed with this procedure.

2. In showing Mr. Darden Senator Cooper's letter and our proposed reply I also called his attention to an article by John Finney which appeared in the New York Times this morning. Finney's article indicated that Senator Cooper planned to make "...one last effort to postpone deployment of the Sentinel defense system." The article went on to say that, with the approval of the Majority Leader,

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Senator Cooper proposed to call the Senate into an unusual closed door executive session. At that session he would discuss "classified intelligence information" that he thinks demonstrates that neither Communist China nor the Soviet Union poses as great a missile threat as postulated by the Administration in ordering a go ahead in deployment of the "light" Sentinel system. In his final paragraph Finney said one piece of intelligence information obtained by Senator Cooper predicted that Communist China would have only four or five ICBMs by 1973-75.

3. It had been our original intention merely to leave with Darden a copy of our proposed reply to Senator Cooper and immediately to deliver the original letter. However, in view of the Finney article I expressed concern to Darden over the dangers involved in this response. Mr. Darden's initial reaction was that our response was an extremely good one but as he pondered the situation he became increasingly concerned with its ramifications. He first suggested that the Director call Senator Russell on this but decided against it in favor of his first showing our letter to Senator Russell. I told Darden that in keeping with his prior understanding of the Chairman's wishes in matters of this sort the Director had felt he had no alternative but to respond to Senator Cooper. Darden then proceeded to the floor of the Senate to see Senator Russell.

4. Following his meeting with Senator Russell, Darden advised me that while the Chairman did not wish to instruct the Director as to whether or not to send the response, he was quite concerned about the situation. As relayed by Mr. Darden, Senator Russell had said that if it were to be read by Senator Cooper on the Senate floor it would be interpreted as an indication on the part of the Executive Branch that it no longer wished to fight for the Sentinel program. In this connection Senator Russell wondered whether the Director had discussed this proposed response with Secretary Clifford and/or the President. I advised Darden that to my knowledge he had not. The Senator was also concerned about having a Senator who was not a member of the CIA Subcommittee quoting the Director of Central Intelligence on intelligence matters on the floor of the Senate. Senator Russell had said if any member of the Senate can obtain information from the Director like this, there is not much point to having a CIA Subcommittee.

5. In discussing possible solutions to this problem with Mr. Darden I suggested that the Director might call Senator Cooper and point out that while he was most anxious to cooperate, as demonstrated by the fact that he and Senator Percy had been given briefings by

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Agency officers, a written response to the Senator on this issue would create an extremely bad precedent. This would indeed put the Director in an awkward position should he receive similar inquiries from other members of the Congress. Darden thought this was a good approach to the problem but said he did not want to be in a position of dictating how we should handle this. I had discussed with Darden the possibility of our referring Senator Cooper to the Chairman on this issue on the ground that the CIA Subcommittee wished the Director to deal with the Congress only through the CIA Subcommittee. Darden did not want to belabor the point but said it had been his understanding that this had been a desire on the part of the President as much as it was a position of the Chairman. At this juncture I reported the status of affairs to Mr. Maury.

6. A short time later Mr. Maury advised me that the Director had talked with Mr. Darden and had decided to meet with Senator Russell on the Hill. I met the Director and Mr. Maury at the Capitol and we went directly to the Senate Reception Room. Senator Russell and the Director met privately in the Reception Room. The Chairman reiterated his feelings about our response to Senator Cooper. He added that in matters of this sort oral briefings were often necessary but he felt quite strongly that the Director should not write a letter to an individual member of the Senate containing highly classified intelligence information.

7. Upon our return to Headquarters we discussed the question of how the matter should be handled with Senator Cooper. It was suggested that this be done by a personal telephone call from the Director to Senator Cooper. The Director telephoned Secretary Clifford and informed him of the developments which had taken place. He asked the Secretary for his suggestions as to how this should be handled. The Secretary suggested that it be done by telephone.

8. The Director called Senator Cooper and referred to his letter requesting the information on the missile programs. The Senator immediately responded by indicating that his letter had asked for too much. He said a response was not necessary. Senator Cooper did say, however, that there was another question which he had wanted to raise with the Director but which had slipped his mind. The Director said he expected to be available all day if the Senator wished to call him later.

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9. Mr. Darden and Mr. Woodruff (who had been informed of these developments and had been given a copy of our proposed reply by Darden) were informed of the Director's meeting with Senator Russell and his subsequent conversations with Secretary Clifford and Senator Cooper. Both expressed relief and pleasure that the matter had been resolved in this way.

[Redacted Signature]

Deputy Legislative Counsel

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